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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Letter dated 19 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Commission on Human Rights

On the instruction of my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the attached information* as an official document of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights under item 9 of the provisional agenda.

Signed: Isfandiyar VAHABZADA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reproduced as received, in English and Russian only.

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Annex

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan

Recently, helped by financial backing and incessant propaganda from the Armenian diaspora and by influence and pressure brought to bear by anti-Turkish forces, the Republic of Armenia has managed to mislead public opinion in a number of European countries and international bodies and, as a result, unfounded claims and accusations relating to the myth of Armenian genocide have found their way back onto the world political agenda. While mankind embarks on a new era and a new millennium with dreams of peace and worldwide prosperity, attempts by Armenian ideologues and their allies to call Turkey to historical account with one-sided and contrived accusations only serve to foster national and religious divisions and heighten tensions. No national parliament has the authority to pass judgement on the history of another people or hand down directives relating to particular historical events. If, however, parliaments believe they do have the authority and the right to do so, they should rely on the historical facts and not lose their sense of justice and objectivity or fall under the influence of nationalism and xenophobia.

Unfortunately the Parliaments of France and Italy, and even the European Parliament, disregarding this, have rushed to judgement on the subject of events that took place in the early 20th century in the Ottoman Empire.

Their unjust and hostile judgements on Turkey, which once gave Armenians refuge, based on falsifications of history and Armenian inventions and delivered in innocence of the substance of the matter, have aroused righteous annoyance and disquiet among the people and society of Azerbaijan.

Like all the other countries involved in military actions during the First World War, the Ottoman Empire witnessed bloody events. In those events it was not only Armenians who suffered, the Turks also sustained heavy losses. Hundreds of thousands of innocent Turks died at the hands of armed Armenian brigades urged on by specific promises from the great Powers. Today's talk of a supposed genocide against the Armenians sullies the memory of these innocent victims. To our great regret, the accusations of genocide now being levelled against the Turks in several European countries further the covert purpose of damaging the authority of the Republic

of Turkey, which holds an eminent position in modern world society, and fostering hostility towards Turkic peoples that have made a worthy contribution to human civilisation.

Such unilateral decisions by European parliaments evoke among the Azerbaijani people a justified sense of regret. This is because the Azerbaijani people repeatedly suffered hardship and misfortune in the twentieth century owing to unwarranted Armenian territorial claims on neighbouring States. The historically Azerbaijani lands of Zanzegur and Geicha were annexed to Armenia by force and the Azerbaijanis living there fell victim to a policy of unremitting terror and ethnic cleansing: some were annihilated and the remainder, driven off their native lands, became refugees and displaced persons.

Facing armed aggression from Armenia in 1988, the Azerbaijani people suffered a great injustice and sustained countless losses: one fifth of the country is under occupation and tens of thousands of people have perished, been left as invalids, or fallen into Armenian captivity. Intolerable living conditions are now harsh everyday reality for over a million refugees and displaced persons within the Republic. The genocide of Azerbaijanis perpetrated by the occupying Armenians in the Azerbaijan city of Khojaly in February 1992 was in its savagery one of the most monstrous crimes of the twentieth century, comparable in inhumanity with such millennial tragedies as Katyn, Salaspils or Song Mi.

If the politicians who today are digging into the past and raising the question of "Armenian genocide" really wish to get to grips with this historical issue, they should acquaint themselves not only with Armenian sources but also with other historical records, Turkish and Azerbaijani ones among them, and with the objective research into the subject that has been done in the United States of America and Europe.

Though they pass judgement on historical events without taking the time to understand them properly, some Western parliaments are oddly apt to remain silent on the subject of a policy of genocide, terrorism, separatism and occupation that is being pursued before their very eyes. While the aftermath of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan has yet to be overcome and efforts are still being made within international bodies and the Minsk Group to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, support from the legislatures of democratic States for the occupying Armenians even in historical terms must adversely affect the peace process.

The "Government of Western Armenia" that has recently announced itself the successor to the "Armenians of Western Armenia", emboldened by the reinstatement of the "Armenian

genocide" on the agenda, is attempting to lay the ideological foundations for a carve-up in the region and has levelled unjust accusations against both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan declares that if judgement is to be passed on instances when Armenians have been killed by Turkey or Turks there can be no double standards: the world community must also acknowledge that Armenians are engaged in a policy of genocide against Turks and Azerbaijanis. People must study the history, causes and consequences of the Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts in Anatolia and in the Southern Caucasus in parallel, and arrive at an overall and fair opinion.

The Ministry considers that the admission of a double standard in international politics allows artificial prominence to be given to the imagined Armenian genocide and by creating the impression of a "poor" Armenia provides indirect justification for its aggression against Azerbaijan, thereby hampering the application of the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the United Nations Security Council and at OSCE summits.

The Ministry regards acknowledgement of the imagined Armenian genocide as a fact as endorsement of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan and support for the aggressor. Such hasty and tendentious decisions hinder the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, damage the vital spirit of trust among the peoples of the region, undermine security and stability and allow scope for unpredictable and undesirable developments. The Ministry calls upon all European parliaments and political groupings to oppose decisions that open the way to further confrontations.

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